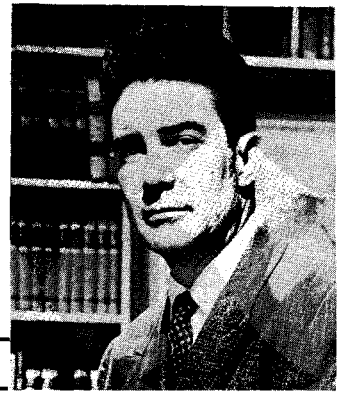


THE *Dan Smoot Report*

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DAN SMOOT

WHO IS TAMPERING WITH THE SOUL OF AMERICA?

by Jenkin Lloyd Jones
Editor of *The Tulsa Tribune*

Jenkin Lloyd Jones was born at Madison, Wisconsin, in 1911. Except for service in the U. S. Navy during World War II, he has been on the staff of the Tribune in Tulsa, Oklahoma, since his graduation from the University of Wisconsin in 1933. He has been Editor of the Tribune for 20 years.

His father, Richard Lloyd Jones, was once owner and Editor of The Wisconsin State Journal. Jenkin Lloyd Jones is a nephew of the late Frank Lloyd Wright, and is the namesake of a famous grandfather who helped organized Henry Ford's World War I Peace Ship.

This article (reprinted with special permission) is a slightly abbreviated version of a speech which Mr. Jones delivered to The American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1962. The speech is a revision of one which Mr. Jones made to the Inland Daily Press Association in Chicago on October 16, 1961.

The Wisconsin State Journal originally reprinted Mr. Jones' 1961 speech, hoping, as the publisher of the Journal said, "it would arouse some readers to a realization of what is happening in America today." The astonishing response (from all kinds of people, all over the country) revealed that the people were already aroused.

This Report first published the following version of Mr. Jones' speech on August 27, 1962. I reprint it now, in the closing days of this fateful political year, not only because of demands from readers, but also because it touches the most vital questions of our time. Who is tampering with the soul of America? Has the soul of our great nation been affected? Are the people awake to the truth that we have been following the leadership of misguided (or sinister) men who have abandoned or tried to corrupt the principles on which our society was built? Are the people ready for a return to constitutional law in the conduct of national affairs? Will they take the opportunity, this year, to elect to Congress and the White House men who will, as Senator Barry Goldwater promised, limit the federal government to the performance of tasks needed and constitutionally sanctioned?

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This is to be a jeremiad.

I am about to inflict upon you an unrelieved, copper-bottomed, six-ply, all-wool, 25-minute howl of calamity about the present moral climate of America. And I am going to talk about our responsibilities therefor as the temporary custodians of America's press.

The pathway of history is littered with the bones of dead states and fallen empires. Most of them rotted out before they were overwhelmed. And they were not, in most cases, promptly replaced by something better.

Nearly 1,000 years elapsed between the fall of Western Rome and the rise of the Renaissance; and, in between, we had the Dark Ages in which nearly all of man's institutions were inferior to those which had gone before. I don't want my children's children to pass through a couple of centuries of dialectic materialism before the sun comes up again.

It is sad to watch the beginnings of decay. It was sad to see an age of Pericles replaced by the drunken riots of Alcibiades. There was, indeed, just cause for gloom when the Roman mobs, flabby with free bread and bemused by free circuses, cheered for the unspeakable Nero and the crazy Caligula.

Alaric's Goths finally poured over the walls of Rome. But it was not that the walls were low. It was that Rome, itself, was low. The sensual life of Pompeii, the orgies on Lake Trasimeme, the gradually weakened fibre of a once self-disciplined people — all these brought Rome down. She went down too early. She had much to teach the world.

And so, I look upon our own country; and much that I see disturbs me. We are a great people. We have a noble tradition. We have much to teach the world, and if America should go down soon it would be too early.

One thing is certain. We shall be given no centuries for a leisurely and comfortable decay.

We have an enemy now — remorseless, crude, brutal and cocky. However much the leaders of the communist conspiracy may lie to their subjects about our motives, about our conditions of prosperity, our policies and aims, one thing they believe themselves implicitly — and that is that we are in an advanced state of moral decline.

It is a dogma of current communist faith that America is Sodom and Gomorrah, ready for the kill.

Do you know what scares me about the communists?

It's not their political system, which is primitive and savage. It's not their economic system which works so badly that progress in a few directions is purchased at the price of progress in all the rest. It is their puritanism. They are confident that they are morally superior.

You can't get very far into Russia before the naive questions of your Intourist guide reveal that she thinks she is talking to a soft fop who is ripe for the tumbril and the guillotine. In the schoolyard, the children rush up to show you, not their yoyos, but their scholarship medals. And when you offer them new Lincoln pennies as souvenirs, they rip off their little Young Pioneer buttons and hand them to you, proud that they are not taking gifts, but are making a fair exchange.

The Russian stage is as austere as the Victorian stage. Russian literature may be corny, but it's clean, and it glorifies the Russian people and exudes optimism and promise. Russian art is stiffly representational, but the paintings and the sculpture strive to depict beauty and heroism — Russian beauty, of course, and Russian heroism.

And what of us?

We are now at the end of the third decade of the national insanity known as "progressive education": everybody passes; the report cards are noncommittal lest the failure be faced

with the fact of his failure; all move at a snail pace like a trans-Atlantic convoy so that the slowest need not be left behind; and all proceed toward adulthood in the lockstep of "togetherness."

With what results? At an age when European kids are studying the human capillary system and discussing the binomial theorem, our youngsters are raising pollywogs on the classroom windowsill and pretending to keep store. This is what is known as "learning by doing." We have produced tens of thousands of high school graduates who move their lips as they read and cannot write a coherent paragraph. While our Russian contemporaries (who were supposed to be dedicated to the mass man) have been busy constructing an elite, we have been engaged in the wholesale production of mediocrity. What a switch!

I wish you could have read all the letters I have received in the past few months from disgusted teachers who have tried to reintroduce principles of hard work and integrity in their classrooms over the opposition of the school hierarchies. It is high time that these Ph.D. 'd pooh-bahs of John Deweyism stepped forward and permitted themselves to be graded. But no.

You recall that last fall the school board of the little township of Twin Lakes, Wisconsin, dissatisfied with modern primers, announced that it was introducing reprints of 80-year-old *McGuffey's Readers*. Maybe it was making a bad mistake. Maybe the new books and new teaching methods are far superior. Here was a fine chance to find out.

But did the Wisconsin State Board of Education offer a sporting challenge — a one-year test, for example, to see which was the better approach, theirs or McGuffey's? Not a bit of it. The State Board merely moved to deprive Twin Lakes of state aid to the thunderous applause, I'm sorry to say, of the so-called "liberals."

When was the last time you, as editors, examined the curricula of your local schools?

Do your kids bring home meaningful report cards, or are parents just getting a lot of gobbledegook about adjustments and attitudes? When was the last time you asked to look at any senior English themes? When have you given a fine picture spread to your town's best scholars?

Having generally neglected disciplines in education, it was quite logical that we Americans should neglect disciplines in art. The great painters and sculptors of the past studied anatomy so diligently that many of them snatched bodies. And today, after many centuries, we stare at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel or at the walls of the Reichsmuseum and marvel at their works.

But this self-discipline is of little concern to the modern non-objective painter. All he needs is pigment and press agent. He can stick bits of glass, old rags and quids of used chewing tobacco on a board; and he is a social critic. He can drive a car back and forth in pools of paint and *Life* magazine will write him up.

Talent is for squares. What you need is vast effrontery. This is the kind of art that a painter with no ability can paint, and a teacher with no ability can teach. But the tiny minority of youngsters who might have the spark of a Titian or a Rembrandt within them stay unencouraged and unrecognized. And our museums are filled with splashes, cubes and blots being stared at by confused citizens who haven't the guts to admit they are confused.

But fakery in art is a light cross we bear. Much more serious is our collapse of moral standards and the blunting of our capacity for righteous indignation.

Our Puritan ancestors were too preoccupied with sin. They were hag-ridden and guilt-ridden, and theirs was a repressed and neurotic society. But they had horsepower.

They wrested livings from the rocky land, built our earliest colleges, started our literature, caused our industrial revolution, and found time in between to fight the Indians,

the French and the British, to bawl for abolition, woman suffrage and prison reform, and to experiment with graham crackers and bloomers. They were a tremendous people.

And for all their exaggerated attention to sin, their philosophy rested on a great granite rock. Man didn't have to be bad. He could and should be better. And if he wanted to escape the eternal fires, he'd damned well better be.

In recent years, all this has changed in America. We have decided that sin is largely imaginary. We are bemused with behaviorist psychology which holds that abstract things like insight, will and spirit are figments of the imagination. Man, says the behaviorist, is either a product of a happy combination of genes and chromosomes or an unhappy combination. He moves in an environment that will tend to make him good, or tend to make him evil. He is just a chip tossed helplessly by forces beyond his control, and therefore not responsible.

Well, the theory that misbehavior can be cured by pulling down tenements and erecting in their places elaborate public housing is not holding water. The crime rates continue to rise along with our outlays for social services.

We are far gone in fancy euphemy. There are no lazy bums any more — only "deprived persons." It is impolite to speak of thugs. They are "underprivileged." Yet the swaggering, duck-tailed young men who boldly flaunt their gang symbols on their motorcycle jackets are far more blessed in creature comforts, opportunities for advancement, and freedom from drudgery than 90 per cent of the children of the world. We have sown the dragon's teeth of pseudo-scientific sentimentality; and out of the ground has sprung the legion bearing switch-blade knives and bicycle chains.

Clearly something is missing. Could it be what the rest of the world's children have been

given — the doctrine of individual responsibility?

Relief is gradually becoming an honorable career in America. It is a pretty fair life, if you have neither conscience nor pride. An angry old judge in Muskogee County, Oklahoma, upon his retirement recently, asserted that in his last docket 37 bastardy cases were filed for no other purpose than to qualify for the relief rolls, and that in most cases both the plaintiff and the defendant continued living together while awaiting the next arrival. Any effort to stop this racket brings an immediate threat that federal aid funds will be withdrawn.

The state will give a mother a bonus for her illegitimate children, and if she neglects them sufficiently she can save enough out of her ADC payments to keep herself and her boy friends in wine and gin. Nothing is your fault. And when the city fathers of Newburgh suggest that able-bodied welfare clients might sweep the streets, the "liberal" editorialists arise as one man and denounce them for their mediaeval cruelty.

I don't know how long America can stand this erosion of principle. But if we wish to survive, maybe we had better do something about the elaborate pretense that there is no difference between the genuinely-unfortunate and the mobs of relievers who gather to throw bottles every time the cops try to make a legitimate arrest. The welfare state that taxes away the rewards for responsible behavior so that it can remove the age-old penalties for irresponsible behavior is building on a foundation of jelly.

Finally, there is the status of our entertainment and our literature.

Can anyone deny that movies are dirtier than ever? But they don't call it dirt. They call it "realism." Why do we let them fool us? Why do we nod owlishly when they tell us that filth is merely a daring art form, that licentiousness is really social comment? Isn't it plain that the financially-harassed movie

industry is putting gobs of sex in the darkened drive-ins in an effort to lure curious teen-agers away from their tv sets?

Recently, Bill Diehl, the righteously-angry entertainment editor of the *St. Paul Dispatch*, ran down the list of present and coming attractions, as follows:

Walk on the Wild Side — set in a brothel;

A View From the Bridge — incest;

The Mark — a strange young man trifles with little girls;

The Children's Hour — two school teachers suspected of being Lesbians;

All Fall Down — a psychopathic attacker of females;

Cape Fear — a crazy rapist;

Lolita — a middle-aged man's affair with a 12-year-old;

The Chapman Report — the adventures of a nymphomaniac.

All this and popcorn, too!

In a recent speech, Mr. Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, asked the plaintive question:

"Why, despite our unceasing efforts, does the film industry fail at times to have public confidence?"

Then he suggested an answer. The movie people apologize too much, he said. They should take pride in the fact that they have amended their production code. Mr. Johnston apparently uses the term "amended" when he means a general tooth extraction. He asks:

"What art form has not had to keep up with the times to reflect contemporary society?"

Well, hooray for Mr. Johnston's contemporary society: Incestuous Americans, Perverted Americans, Degenerate Americans, Murderous Americans.

How many of these contemporary Americans do you know?

But perhaps the most intriguing part of Mr. Johnston's speech dealt with newspaper

movie ads. It is ridiculous, he claims, for parents to complain about bad influence by movies upon their children when all parents have to do is look closely at the ads. He says:

"I have yet to run across a movie ad so subtle that a concerned parent would not know whether the film was suitable for his child."

Here is a semantical pole-vault that ought to set a world's record: the suggestive half-dressed figures locked in passionate embrace that have been decorating the theatre ads in our great moral dailies are now revealed as a public service, generously paid for by the movie moguls so that parents can be warned!

Last year our advertising manager and I got so tired of Hollywood's horizontal art that we decided to throw out the worst and set up some standards. We thought that this belated ukase of ours might cause some interruption in advertising some shows. But no. Within a couple of hours, the exhibitors were down with much milder ads. How was this miracle accomplished?

It seems that exhibitors are supplied with several different ads for each movie. If the publishers are dumb enough to accept the most suggestive ones, those are what they get. But, if publishers squawk, the cleaner ads are sent down. Isn't it time we all squawked?

I think it's time we gentlemen of the press quit giving Page 1 play to Liz and Eddie. I think it's time we asked our Broadway and Hollywood columnists if they can't find something decent and inspiring going on along their beats.

And the stage: Bawdiness has put on a dinner jacket. The old burlesque skits that you used to be able to see at the Old Howard and the Gayety for six bits are now on display in the most lavish Broadway revues at \$8.80 a seat.

But perhaps we should be glad to settle for good old heterosexual dirt. The April issue of *Show Business, Illustrated*, quotes Dr. L. John

Adkins, a New York psychotherapist, as saying that in his opinion at least 25 per cent of the persons presently connected with the American theater are confirmed homosexuals.

Even the normally strong-stomached drama critics are beginning to get mad. Howard Taubman, in a lead article in the drama section of *The New York Times*, recently wrote as follows:

"It is time to speak openly and candidly of the increasing incidence and influence of homosexuality on the New York stage. It is noticeable when a male designer dresses the girls in a musical to make them unappealing and disrobes the boys so that more male skin is visible than art or illusion requires. It is apparent in a vagrant bit of nasty dialog thrown into a show, or in a redundant touch like two mannish females walking across a stage without a reason or a word of comment."

Last summer, an American touring company presented one of Tennessee Williams' ripper offerings to an audience in Rio de Janeiro. The audience hooted and walked out. And where did it walk to? Right across the street where a Russian ballet company was putting on a beautiful performance for the glory of Russia! How stupid can we get?

Not long ago in Phoenix, I attended a try-out of a new play by William Inge. It takes place in the Chicago apartment of a never-married woman whose son by a bellhop has just been released from reform school, and whose current boy friend is being seduced by the nymphomaniac across the hall whose husband is a drunk. I wonder if this show is going on the road around the world.

We are drowning our youngsters in violence, cynicism and sadism piped into the living room and even the nursery. The grandchildren of the kids who used to weep because The Little Match Girl froze to death now feel cheated if she isn't slugged, raped and thrown into a Bessemer converter.

And there's our literature. I presume we all have our invitations to become charter sub-

scribers of *Eros*, the new quarterly magazine of erotica at \$10 a copy. I got three invitations, so either the Addressograph got stuck or I'm considered a hot prospect.

Anyway, the publisher, Ralph Ginzburg, says this:

"Eros has been born as a result of the recent series of court decisions that have realistically interpreted America's obscenity laws and that have given to this country a new breadth of freedom of expression."

And what are the dimensions of this "breadth of freedom"? Well, we are assured that *Eros*' first issue will include an article on aphrodisiacs, a schematic drawing for a male chastity belt, a story about an old New York bawdy house where women copulated with beasts, the latest word on Havana's red light district, and the memoirs of a stripper which, it says here, "is astonishing for its matter-of-factness."

Isn't it splendid that Mr. Ginzburg stands with the frozen ghosts of Valley Forge as a fearless defender of his country's freedom? Ten dollars, please!

The fast buck boys have succeeded in convincing our bumfuzzled judges that there is no difference between a peep show and a moral lecture. The old eye-poppers which tourists used to smuggle back from Paris under their dirty shirts are now clothed in judicial blessing. A Chicago judge has recently issued a blanket injunction against anyone who might try to prevent the sale of *Tropic of Cancer* to children. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Ulysses* are on the paperback shelves right next to the comic books. They can close the bookstalls on the Seine. It's all at your corner drugstore where the kids hang out.

Don Maxwell, of *The Chicago Tribune*, last year asked his book department to quit advertising scatological literature by including it in the list of best sellers. The critics and the book publishers have denounced him for tampering with the facts. I would like to raise a somewhat larger question:

Who is tampering with the soul of America?

For nations do have souls. They have collective personalities. People who think well of themselves collectively exhibit elan and enthusiasm and morale. Where they low-rate themselves as individuals, they will not long remain the citizens of great nations.

Dr. Celia Deschin, specialist in medical sociology at Adelphi college, in a recent article in *This Week* magazine, says it's time for a new kind of Kinsey Report. She asserts that the late Doctor Kinsey produced a report that was heavily loaded by exhibitionists and that did immense damage to America by peddling the impression that sexual self-discipline neither exists in this country nor is it desirable.

Generally, she says, those parents who are afraid to lay down the law have the most miserable children. Children, she points out, want honest direction and a set of sensible rules to live by. Where these are denied them on the fantastic theory that it's no longer scientific to say *No*, the kids often develop subconscious anxiety. Much juvenile delinquency springs from a deep hunger for rules. It is a masochistic effort to seek punishment. The child, says Doctor Deschin, abhors a world where everything goes.

Or, as my tough-minded old grandmother put it,

"The youngster who doesn't know that there's a Lord in Israel bounces around in a limbo where there is no force of gravity. If you think he's happy, you're crazy."

The time has come to dust off the rule book. The game is unplayable if you're allowed two strikes or six, if you can use a bat or a cannon, and if some days you can have three men on third and other days there isn't any third base at all. We have to stop trying to make up our own rules.

And that goes for all of us. It's time to quit seeking learning without effort and wages without work. It's time we got mad about

payola. We should ask the Lord's forgiveness for our inflated expense accounts, and quit pretending that goonery is a human right.

Do not let me overdraw the picture. This is still a great, powerful, vibrant, able, optimistic nation. Americans — our readers — do believe in themselves and in their country.

But there is rot, and there is blight, and there is cutting out and filling to be done if we, as the leaders of free men, are to survive the hammer blows which quite plainly are in store for us all.

We have reached the stomach-turning point. We have reached the point where we should re-examine the debilitating philosophy of permissiveness. Let this not be confused with the philosophy of liberty. The school system that permits our children to develop a quarter of their natural talents is not a champion of our liberties. The healthy man who chooses to loaf on unemployment compensation is not a defender of human freedom. The playwright who would degrade us, the author who would profit from pandering to the worst that's in us, are no friends of ours.

It's time we hit the sawdust trail. It's time we revived the idea that there is such a thing as sin — just plain old willful sin. It is time we brought self-discipline back into style. And who has a greater responsibility at this hour than we — the gentlemen of the press.

So I suggest:

Let's look at our educational institutions at the local level; and if Johnny can't read by the time he's ready to get married, let's find out why.

Let's look at the distribution of public largesse, and if, far from alleviating human misery, it is producing the sloth and irresponsibility that intensifies it, let's get it fixed.

Let's quit being bulldozed and bedazzled by self-appointed long-hairs. Let's have the guts to say that a book is dirt if that's what we think of it, or that a painting may be a

daub if the judges unwittingly hang it upside down. And if some beatnik welds together a collection of rusty cog-wheels and old corset stays and claims it's a greater sculpture than Michelangelo's "David," let's have the courage to say that it looks like junk.

Let's blow the whistle on plays that would bring blushes to an American Legion stag party. Let's not be awed by movie characters with barnyard morals even if some of them have been photographed climbing aboard the Presidential yacht. Let us pay more attention in our news columns to the decent people everywhere who are trying to do something for the good of others.

In short, let's cover up the cesspool and start planting some flowers.

Well, that's the jeremiad. I never dreamed I'd go around sounding like an advance man for Carry Nation. On some people I still think bikinis look fine.

But I am fed up to here with educationists and pseudo-social scientists who have underrated our potential as a people. I am tired of seeing America debased in the eyes of foreigners.

And I am genuinely disturbed that, to idealistic youth in many countries, the fraud of communism appears synonymous with morality, while we, the chief repository of real freedom, are regarded as being in the last stages of decay.

We can learn a lesson from history. Twice before, our British cousins appeared to be heading into a collapse of principle; and twice they drew themselves back. The British court reached an advanced stage of corruption under the Stuarts. But the people rebelled. And in the wild days of George IV and William IV, it looked as though Britain were rotting out again; but under Victoria, the English went on to the peak of their power.

In this hour of misbehavior, self-indulgence and self-doubt, let this be the story of America. Unless I misread the signs, a great number of our people are ready. Let there be a fresh breeze, a breeze of new pride, new idealism, new integrity.

And here, gentlemen, is where we come in. We have typewriters. We have presses. We have a huge audience.

How about raising hell?

If *The Dan Smoot Report* was instrumental in bringing you to the point of asking what you can do about saving the country from mushrooming big government, here is a checklist for you: Have you urged others to subscribe to the *Report*? Have you sent them reprints of a particular issue of the *Report*? Have you shown them a Dan Smoot film? Have you ever suggested a Bound Volume of *The Dan Smoot Report* for use by speakers, debaters, students, writers? Have you read and passed on to others any of the Dan Smoot books — *The Invisible Government*, *The Hope Of The World*, *America's Promise*?

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